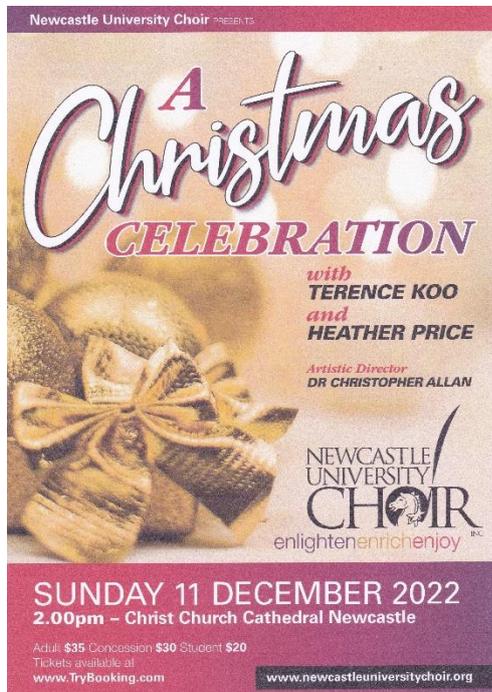




Cacophony

Issue 65, November 2022



This newsletter provides some background and highlights to the choral components of the concert. Interspersed will be solos by our two guest artists.

What better way to start a Christmas concert than *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*? Originally composed by Fred Coot with words by Haven Gillespie, this song was first recorded by Harry Resner and his band in 1934, and immediately became highly popular. Our jazzy version is arranged by Peter Gritton, and includes lots of “dums”, “bops”, “doos” and the like. Visualise Santa bouncing along with the music as he rides his sleigh.



On Sunday afternoon, 11 December at 2:00 pm the Newcastle University Choir (NUC) will perform *A Christmas Celebration* concert in Christ Church Cathedral. Our special guests will be jazz pianist Terence Koo and vocalist Heather Price, two of Newcastle’s best known jazz musicians.

Conducted by Musical Director, Dr Christopher Allan, the concert will feature favourite Christmas songs in the first half, extending to other sentimental favourites in the second half. With the involvement of jazz musicians, there is an upbeat jazz component to most of the concert. This makes the music a lot of fun for both the choir and the audience.

Tickets are \$35 adult, \$30 Concession, and \$20 Student. They can be obtained from www.TryBooking.com or at the door. We cannot accept ticket orders by telephone.

Mary’s Boy Child will be sung in a more traditional style, although there is a quiet jazz beat underneath. Originally composed by Jester Hairston, this carol was first recorded in 1956 in New York City by Harry Belafonte using a calypso rhythm.

Shepherds and their flocks are an essential component of the Christmas story. Composer John Rutter arranged *Quem Pastores Laudevire*, a 14th-century

German carol, for four part choir. Sung in Latin, this beautiful version describes how the shepherds left their flocks, and kings came from afar, to honour the Christ Child and lay gifts in his manger.

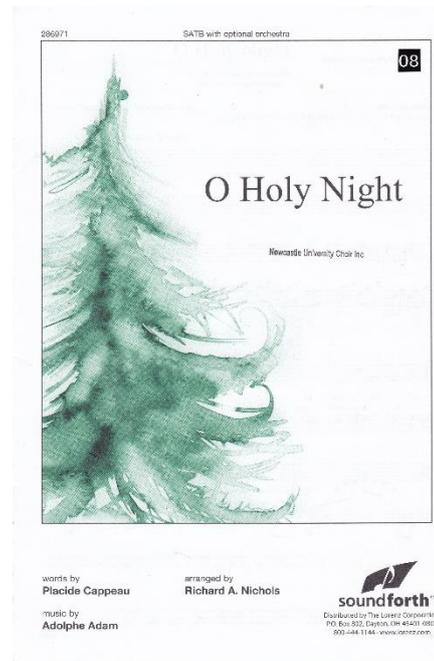
Rutter also wrote *There is a Flower* for George Guest and the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, using words by John Audelay in the 15th Century. The birth of Jesus is compared to a flower, that grows and never dies. His impact spreads to "rich and poor of every land", bring love and hope to all humankind.

Night and Day is not a Christmas song, but its focus on love is appropriate for the season. Composed by Cole Porter, it was originally performed on stage by Fred Astaire in the 1932 musical *Gay Divorce*. Astaire's recording later topped the music charts for 10 weeks. This song has remained a well-known favourite for almost 100 years. Our choral arrangement is by Andrew Carter.

Almost the exact opposite in focus is *Stormy Weather*. Written by Harold Arlen with words by Ted Koehler, our arrangement is by Kirby Shaw. The song laments the loss of a loved partner, and the appearance of "blues". Ethyl Waters first sang this song at the Cotton Club in Harlem in 1933.

In 1942, Duke Ellington was not allowed to record his own songs for a short period due to a musician's strike. Instead, he recorded a song written by his son, Mercer, with lyrics by Ted Persons, titled *Things Ain't What They Used to Be*. The middle of WWII, plus the strike, provided the inspiration for first a dreary and dark outlook to life, but then a much more positive future, the dawn of a new "day of glory" and the Army's fight to victory. This song and its lyrics can easily be transposed to the modern-day challenges facing the world.

Terence Koo has arranged two songs for the choir, "Fly Me to the Moon" and "Sunny", both of which will include his own jazz piano improvisations. Other choral arrangements which will feature Heather Price on vocals focus on angels, smiling and sunshine, all which have at least an indirect relation to the Christmas season.



Our concert ends with an outstanding choral version of the much-loved Christmas Carol *O Holy Night*. Originally based on a French poem by Placide Cappeau in 1843, the music was written by Adolf Adam in 1847. The carol reflects on the birth of Jesus as humanity's redemption. Recorded by many outstanding singers over the decades, especially sopranos, this carol has become a regular part of any Christmas concert. Our arrangement by Richard Nichols, features the men for many of the melody lines. It is very uplifting to sing.

We wish all our readers and supporters a most Merry Christmas and the best of New Years for 2024.

Howard Bridgman, Editor

(References: Wikipedia sites for brief background descriptions)